

A LETTER to a LORD upon his happy Conversion from Popery to the Protestant Religion.

By G. Burnett, D. D.

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Right Noble Lord,

When I consider seriously these words of St. Paul; *Brethren, you see your calling, that not many noble, not many wise, according to the flesh, not many mighty are called: but hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and weak things to confound the mighty, and base things in the world, and things not accounted of, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are:* When, I say, I consider of these words so often, I admire at that rare blessing of God, which he hath vouchsafed to you a Noble and mighty Man; namely, that he should grace you with that true and incomparable Nobility, which is attained by true Faith in Christ Jesus, and a holy life. As much greater as this blessing is, so much the more holy and sincere ought your life to be, and so much the more upright are you to walk with your God; lest that your thorns (that is, Riches, Pleasures, and Honour) should choke the seed of the Gospel which is sown in you.

For this I am sure of, that God hath begun some great work in you, which he will finish to the glory of his own name, and will bring to pass, that as heretofore you had care so to live a Noble-man amongst Noble-men, that you might observe the decorum, and maintain the dignity of Nobility: so hereafter that you may employ your whole self in this, that you may defend and uphold the honour and dignity of the Protestant Religion; and in this life upon the earth to resemble that holy and heavenly life which you shall lead in the world to come. Call to mind continually (my Lord) in all your words and deeds, that we are graced with this honour to be made the sons of God by Jesus Christ: for that meditation will by the help of the holy Ghost, work this care in us, that we never commit any thing unworthy of that holy name of Christ, by which we are called. And yet alas, such is our estate, as that if we endeavour to please Christ, we are sure to displease men, and must be content to condemn the vain-glory of the world, that we may enjoy heavenly and eternal glory with God; *for it is impossible* (as Christ saith) *for him to believe in God which seeks the honour and praise of men.* I mean of the men of this world, which as the Kingly Prophet saith, *are lighter and vainer than vanity itself.* And therefore their judgment is little worth, and less to be esteemed: but rather the judgment of God, who seeth not all our actions only, but even our most hidden thoughts and purposes. Which being so, were it not folly and madness to forsake such a God, to please so fond a world? It were a shameful thing, if a wife should endeavour to please other men, rather than her Husband. How much more then unprofitable is it, if our souls should rather aim to please the vain world, than their only Spouse Christ Jesus? If the only Son of God was content

not only to be reviled, yea and scourged, but even to die upon the Cross as a cursed malefactor, and all for us: why should not we much more bear patiently the taunts and mocks, yea even the slanders of Gods enemies? Let us therefore arm our selves as it were with a holy pride, and (in a sort) scorn and laugh at the mocks of the *Roman Catholics*; and putting upon us mercy and pity as the feeling members of Christ, let us bewail so great blindness in them, and let us intreat the Lord for them, to pull them out of that palpable darkness into his true and marvellous light, lest Satan bind them to himself in his everlasting Apprentiship; and so being his bond-slaves, and hired sworn servants of his black-guard, do send them out to prosecute Jesus Christ in his members. Which when they have done all they can, and all that the Devil their Master can teach them, though the Devil himself should burst with malice, and they for anger grind their teeth; yet shall it all tend to the magnifying of Gods glory which they labour to obscure, and to the furtherance of their salvation, whom they so disdained: yea, to the increase of their glory in a better world, whom in this world they thought worthy of nothing but disgrace: and surely (my most honorable Lord) he that is possessed with the certainty of this faith, will without doubt make open War with the corrupt affections of his own nature, and with all the world, yea even with the Devil himself; and will not doubt but in time to overcome them all. Therefore let us humble our selves to our God and Father everlasting, that he would increase that faith in us, and bring forth in us those most blessed and sweet fruits of faith in our hearts and lives, which he useth to work in them whom he hath elected; that so our faith may appear not a fained, but a true faith; not a dead, but a living faith; not a humane, but a divine work in us; that so it may be to us an infallible pledge of our salvation to come. Let us labour to shew our selves the legitimate and undoubted children of God in seeking above all things, that his most holy Name may be sanctified in our selves and others; and in imitating his admirable love and gentleness, which makes his Sun to shine on good and bad, Let us worship his heavenly Majesty in spirit and truth; and let us yield up the temple of our hearts to Christ Jesus as an acceptable sacrifice unto him; yea, let us shew our selves members of the heavenly High Priest Christ Jesus; in sacrificing to God our bodies, and in crucifying the flesh with the Affection and Lusts thereof; that sin being dead, God may create in us a spiritual life, whereby Christ Jesus may live in us. Let us dye to sin, and dye to our selves, and to the world, that we may live blessedly to God and Christ Jesus; yea let us acknowledg and shew by our lives, that we were once dead, but now are raised to the life of grace, by the power of Christ Jesus. Let our conversation be heavenly, though we live on the earth; let us begin that life here, which we hope to lead in heaven; let the Image of God shine bright in us; let us disgrace and wear out the old Image of Sin and Satan, and labour to renew the Image of Christ Jesus, that all that see us may acknowledg Gods Image in us. Which holy Image of grace, as it is beautiful and glorious, in all Gods Saints, so in you (my good Lord) it shall be so much more glorious, in as much as you go before others in Birth, Nobility, Honour, and high Place. O what a pleasant sight is it to all true Christian men, yea to the Angels; yea how acceptable to the Lord himself, to behold a man of your place and estate so far to forget the world and deny himself; so deeply to consider the frailty of his own Nature, and the vanity of all temporal things, as to say with

a worm and no man; and to cry out with David, *Turn thy face to me, and have mercy upon me, for I am desolate and poor: O happy and true rich man, which hath attained to this spiritual and heavenly poverty, and can give a farewell to himself and the world, and all things that he hath for Christs sake; and can freely renounce and forsake carnal reason, human learning, company, and counsel of Friends, wealths, honors, lordships, pleasures of all sorts, delight of the Court, high places and preferments, dignity, and offices; yea, favor of princes; yea, his own self!* How welcom shall he be to Christ, which can deny all those for Christs sake? Such a one may go for a Fool in the World, but he shall be of the Almighty's counsel; such a man knoweth that felicity consists not in any thing that this world can afford, and therefore in the midst of all his wealth and abundance, he crieth out to God as tho he had nothing, even out of the feeling of his heart, *Give us this day our daily Bread.* Such a man preferreth the rebuke of Christ, before the honour of the world and the afflictions of Christs Religion, before the pleasures of the world: and because he despised all things in respect of Christ and his righteousness, and is possessed and grounded with God's spirit, therefore he sings with true joy of heart with the kingly Prophet; *The Lord is my Shepherd, therefore I can want nothing, neither will I feel hunger, or any outward thing; he feeds me in green pasture, and leads me forth beside the water of comfort.* This man distrusts himself and all the creatures in the world, that he may trust and cleave only unto God; neither aims he at any pleasure, any wisdom, any honour, any riches, any credit or estimation, but such as comes from God himself; and therefore professeth with the same Prophet: *I have none in Heaven but thee alone, and none in the earth do I desire but thee, my flesh consumeth with longing after thee, and thou Lord art my heritage, and portion for ever.* He that spake thus was a wealthy and mighty King, yet suffered he not the eyes of his mind to be blinded or dazzled with the glittering glory of riches, pleasures, or honor, or ought else that a kingdom could give; for he knew well that they all came of God, and were held under God, and must all be used to his glory, and that he that gave them hath far better things to give his children. And therefore that King and Prophet makes his heavenly proclamation before all his people, *Blessed art thou, O Lord God our Father, for ever and ever: thine O Lord is greatness, and power, and glory, and victory: all that is in Heaven and Earth is thine, thine is the kingdom, Lord and thou excellest as head over all: riches and honour come of thee, and thou art Lord of all: in thy hands is power, strength, and honour, and dignity, and Kingdoms are in thy disposition: therefore we give thee thanks, O God, and we extol thy great and glorious Name.* But who am I, and what is my people, that we should promise such things to thee? For we are Strangers and Sojourners as all our fathers were; our days are like a shadow upon the earth, and here is no abiding.

See how David cannot content himself in abasing himself, and extolling the LORD; and in how many words his affections utter themselves. This was David's meditation, and let this be your Looking-glass; in this Looking-glass look once a day, and pray daily, that God would still open your eyes to behold your own vileness, and his incomprehensible power and love to you, that with King David you may humble your self under the mighty hand of his Majesty, and acknowledge all power and glory to belong to God alone, that so you may be made partakers of those heavenly graces which God bestowed, not on the proud and

Let us, brethren the humble and lowly Jesus Christ, Remember that ordinance of the eternal
God, that saith, Let us the weak glory in his wisdom, nor the strong man in his strength,
nor the rich man in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, in that he understan-
eth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which do mercy and justice on earth; for these
things please me, saith the Lord. Therefore (my good Lord) if you list to boast, boast
 not as the world doth, that you are rich, or that you are of noble birth, or that
 you are heir apparent of a rich Marquessdom, or that you have married so noble
 a woman; leave this kind of boasting to them, who have their minds glewed to
 the World; and therefore have no better things to boast on; whose portion
 being here in this life, they can look for nothing in heaven. But rather rejoyce
 you are entred into the kingdom of Grace; glory in this, that the King of Kings
 hath had mercy on you, and hath drawn you out of the misty darkness of the
 errors of the Romish Religion, hath given you to feel his endless love and mercy
 in Christ, hath made you of a child of wrath, his own son; of a servant to sin
 and the Devil, an heir of heaven; and of a bondslave to Hell, a free Denison of
 the heavenly Jerusalem; and glory in this, that even Christ Jesus himself is gi-
 ven you, and made your own, and with him all things else. So that as *Paul* saith,
all are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, things present or things to come, all
are yours in and by Christ, who is the only felicity of our souls: and therefore who-
 soever have him, have with him all things else. This is the true glory, and the
 sound boasting of Christianity; for hereby is God's mercy extolled, and mans
 pride trodden under foot, by which a man trusting too much to himself, rebel-
 leth against God. This glorious boasting makes us humble even in our highest ho-
 nours, and modest and meek in prosperity, patient and quiet in adversity; in
 troubles strong and courageous, gentle towards all men, joyful in hope, fervent
 in prayer, full of the love of God, but empty of all love of our selves, or ought
 in the world; yea, it makes us Christs true Beadsmen, and his sworn Servants,
 and make us yield up our selves wholly to imitate and follow Christ, and to esteem
 all things else as frail and vain, *yea, using and dross that we may win Christ.*

Right honourable and my good Lord, you see that I am so willingly employ-
 ed in this service of writing to your Honour, and in conferring with you of hea-
 venly matters, that I have forgot my self, or rather your Honor, in being so te-
 dious, which in the beginning I purposed not. I am privy to my self of my
 own ignorance, and guilty of my own insufficiency, as being fitter to be a Scho-
 lar than a teacher; and to hear and learn my self, rather than to teach others;
 and therefore I crave pardon of your Honor: Farewel. The most reverend *E. S.*
 desireth in his heart he had occasion to testifie indeed, that true good will which
 in his soul he bears you; in the mean-time he salutes you, and so doth the illu-
 strious Prince, and all other the honourable Personages which are with me; all
 which rejoyce for this good work of God in you, and in all kindreds do kiss your
 hands; and they do earnestly intreat the Lord for you, that he that hath begun
 so great a work in you, would accomplish the same to the end; and the richer
 you are in temporal Goods, in Lands, and Lordships, that he would make you so
 much the more poor in spirit; that so, your spiritual poverty may do that which
 your worldly riches and honors cannot; namely, bring you at last to eternal and
 never-fading riches of the world to come: Amen.

Your Honours most humble and obedient Servant,
 Printed in the Year 1688.

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